Canada

CANADIAN COAST GUARD SHIP SIR JAMES DOUGLAS

The Canadian Coast Guard Ship, SIR JAMES DOUGLAS, is one of three aids to navigation vessels operating on Canada's 29,000 kilometers of Pacific coastline. Although she is the smallest aids tender in the west coast fleet, the DOUGLAS is a hardy vessel.

She carries a staff of eight officers and 21 crew members to service lightstations and navigational aids in the waters surrounding Vancouver Island, along the mainland coast and on the Fraser River. A typical voyage for the DOUGLAS begins on the west side of Vancouver Island where she travels up the coast, around the northern tip and home to Victoria down the eastern side. This trip normally takes ten days but can last up to two weeks. On each voyage, the DOUGLAS resupplies 24 of British Columbia's 42 manned lightstations.

Lightstations receive a major re-supply from one of the Canadian Coast Guard aids tenders, the SIR JAMES DOUGLAS, the WOLFE or the CAMSELL at least once a month. The vessels bring everything needed to operate a lightstation - food, fuel, machinery, mail and correspondence school material. Even pigs, cows, goats and a piano have been transported to remote and isolated locations.

Some stations are so hard to reach that a Canadian Coast Guard helicopter has to complete the mission. The lightstation at ESTEVAN POINT, on the west coast of Vancouver Island is inaccessible by road and its rocky, windswept shore is dangerous even for a surf boat. The SIR JAMES DOUGLAS carries supplies destined for ESTEVAN POINT to Hot Springs Cove, 13 kilometers to the southwest where a helicopter lifts them the rest of the way.

According to her log, the DOUGLAS has never missed a scheduled trip around Vancouver Island. She follows relatively the same route on every voyage and, like the WOLFE and the CAMSELL, can be called on to do search and rescue work.

The DOUGLAS also services navigational aids in mainland coastal waters, up the Fraser River and in the Fraser Delta. She travels north to the Queen Charlotte/Prince Rupert area twice yearly where she spends between two and six weeks servicing smaller navigational buoys.

Navigational buoys througout the coastal waters are anchored to the bottom of the sea by chains and concrete blocks. The DOUGLAS uses a heavy derrick to lift the buoys on board the ship. The crew then proceeds to scrape, check and repaint the buoys and then replace them in their charted positions.

Battery operated navigational lights are serviced on a regularly scheduled basis or when they are reported extinguished. If necessary, the crew may build concrete beacons to house new navigational lights.

To meet the challenge of performing these many and varied tasks, it is essential that a ship be kept in top condition. Although the DOUGLAS requires very little maintenance, at least four to six weeks a year are set aside for an annual major refit. During this refit, the hull, valves, rudder, propellers, propeller shafts, anchors and cables are inspected and repaired if needed and the vessel is sandblasted and repainted. Essential machinery needed to operate the ship is inspected on a five year continuous cycle. This preventative maintenance program enables the DOUGLAS to operate at a peak level of performance.

The SIR JAMES DOUGLAS was built in 1956 by the Burrard Drydock of Vancouver. She is 46 metres long, 9.5 metres wide and has a draft of 3.2 metres. The DOUGLAS can call on two Crossley six cylinder diesel engines to deliver 1140 horsepower for a top speed of 12 knots or a cruising speed of 10.5 knots.

The ship is the second Canadian Coast Guard vessel to be named after Sir James Douglas, the first governor of the colony and the province of British Columbia. The original SIR JAMES DOUGLAS was a small wooden ship built in 1864 from pine on oak framing and sheathed in copper to protect her from worms.

When a Victoria harbour dredging scheme, for which she had been built, fell through for lack of money, the DOUGLAS was employed by the Government of the Colony as a passenger steamer on a run from Victoria to Comox, calling in at Nanaimo.

The SIR JAMES DOUGLAS was the workhorse of the west coast until the arrival of the QUADRA in 1892. She was continually engaged in the work of lightstation re-supply and construction, she laid cable for the Canadian Pacific Railway, carried out survey work for the British Columbia government and transported inspection parties on numerous official occasions. The first SIR JAMES DOUGLAS was sold to the highest bidder in 1899.

The current SIR JAMES DOUGLAS performs a vital role as an aids to navigation vessel in the Canadian Coast Guard western fleet, living up to the reputation of her predecessor for hard work and reliability.

CCG Western Region
Aids to Navigation

NAME	TYPE	BASE
CAMSELL	icebreaker/ aids tender	Victoria
WOLFE	icebreaker/ aids tender	Prince Rupert
SIR JAMES DOUGLAS	icebreaker/ aids tender	Victoria
MISKANAW	aids tender	Fort McMurray
DUMIT II	aids tender	Hay River
TEMBAH	aids tender	Hay River
ECKALOO	aids tender	Hay River
NAHIDIK	aids tender	Hay River
SIKORSKY	aids servicing/	
HELICOPTER (1)	Supply unit	Prince Rupert
HELICOPTERS (5)	aids servicing	Victoria

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